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### **The Stand Alone Pledge: Our commitment to support estranged students**

Sheffield Hallam University has an outstanding track record in transforming lives. As a University, we are committed to supporting all students who choose to study with us to succeed. Our longstanding and nationally recognised work with care leavers, young carers and, in more recent years, estranged students reflects our commitment to supporting students at every stage of their journey with us.

We currently provide estranged students with support from pre-entry through to graduation and career success, with one-to-one support from designated contacts in our Outreach and Widening Participation Team, Student Funding and Access Support Team, Careers and Employability Team and Student Wellbeing Team. We work with charities and young people's services, both locally and nationally, to include estranged students on our outreach activities and to provide support throughout application. We guarantee 365 day accommodation for estranged students and prioritise allocating accommodation for students who are homeless. Estranged students are an identified priority group for financial support packages, including the Unite Bursary and our hardship fund.

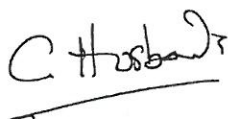
We are proud of what we have done to support estranged students to succeed but know that we can do more and have started working with Stand Alone to strengthen the support we offer. We believe that it is important that students who are meeting the challenges of higher education without family support know how their institution will support them. We want estranged students to feel proud of their achievements and to feel able to be active and valued members of our University community.

We therefore value the opportunity to make a pledge to estranged students that explicitly states our commitments to them and demonstrates our recognition of the challenges that they may face. Over the next two years we commit to extending our existing support, to monitor our progress and to continue to explore how we can best meet the needs of estranged students. Over the next two years we will raise awareness of estranged students within our University and with the employers, schools and colleges they may engage with.

We will ensure estranged students are accessing services that will support them in University, including wellbeing services, intensive career support programmes and residential support. We will support estranged students to explore their options through our outreach activity and will work to ensure that any estranged student considering studying with us can access clear and timely information on how we can support them.

Our commitments as a University will be overseen by Professor Christina Hughes, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience, and supported by designated contacts overseeing each area of our pledge. We hope that our efforts will encourage more estranged students to identify themselves, to take advantage of the support we offer and feel able to succeed in higher education. As a University, we also hope to learn from our estranged students and to better understand the challenges that they face.

Yours sincerely



Professor Chris Husbands  
Vice-Chancellor

## **Our Pledge commitments**

The below outlines our commitments across all areas of the pledge. Additionally, we will work with Stand Alone, other organisations supporting estranged students and with estranged students themselves to review the value of this offer over the two years of this pledge.

### **Finance and on-course Support**

- We will provide information, advice and support to estranged students on how to apply for funding, associated benefits and independent status
- We will make sure estranged students are a priority group within the Hallam Hardship Fund (academic year 2016/17) and within our new Student Success Scheme, due to be launched for new students in 2017/18. The new scheme will comprise of enhanced support and a financial award subject to student need
- We will provide a welcome booklet specifically for estranged students starting at University and a blog providing additional information and advice pages for estranged students throughout their time here
- We will provide named on course contacts for estranged students, who can offer one to one advice and referrals to other specialist services within the University
- We will provide supported referrals to relevant local support groups and external agencies

### **Accommodation**

- We guarantee access to 365 day accommodation - in particular to cover the holiday periods
- We prioritise accommodation for homeless students
- We will work with estranged students to support them in finding accommodation to suit their needs and budget, taking into account challenges
- Support will be provided through a Residential Support Co-ordinator and Management within the student properties

### **Mental health and wellbeing**

- We will provide named contacts for estranged students in the Student Wellbeing Service
  - We will make sure students are aware of internal and external counselling and wellbeing services and how to access them
  - We will ensure staff in Student Wellbeing are aware of the support available from other departments to estranged students
- We will work with the Sheffield Student Health and Wellbeing Board to improve awareness of the needs of estranged students within the city of Sheffield and improve access to low cost or free of charge counselling support

### **Outreach and transition**

- We will include IAG in outreach work for young people and those supporting them who are living without support from their families and/or experiencing family breakdown
- We will continue to foster links with local charities, foyer and homeless shelters to raise awareness of HE and reach those living without support from their families.
- We will continue to raise awareness of estranged students and the challenges they face with university staff, school and college key contacts and Local Authorities
- We will continue to include and prioritise estranged students within our targeted and generic outreach activities and will offer bespoke activities where appropriate to support their progression
- We will communicate the support available for estranged students within our outreach work and in communications to schools and colleges, charities and local authorities
- We will develop specific information for estranged students which is easily accessible on our website - current presence includes our estranged student blog and application support scheme information
- Provide a dedicated support scheme for estranged students applying to us which includes a named contact, the possibility of special consideration, visits to the university, and preparatory interview workshops for certain courses

**Careers and Employability**

- We will provide a designated named contact for estranged students within the careers and employability team
- We will provide Careers and Employability support at outreach activities with estranged students
- We will provide the opportunity to apply for the career mentoring scheme and career impact programme
- We will link up with partners and employers to support and raise awareness about estranged students